

HOW TO COVER POLICY AND STILL BE INTERESTING

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What Isn't Interesting: Following the Governor Around

Parnell to visit Fairbanks

by Staff Report

May 14, 2012 | 968 views | 1 | 2 | |

FAIRBANKS — Gov. Sean Parnell is expected to visit Fairbanks Wednesday to speak at the afternoon Stryker redeployment at Fort Wainwright.

The governor's spokeswoman said Parnell plans to sign a bill that creates economic incentive zones around military bases. The so-called military zones would extend a number of economic incentives for private industry to create partnerships with bases throughout the state.

House Bill 316 was sponsored by Fairbanks Republican Rep. Steve Thompson and was, in part, a response to recent concerns about base closures.

What Isn't Interesting: Process

Gov. Christie, Sen. Sweeney's quickly canceled press conference causes confusion in Trenton

Published: Monday, May 14, 2012, 9:00 PM Updated: Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 7:05 AM



By Star-Ledger Staff

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By [Jenna Portnoy](#) and [Jarrett Renshaw](#)/The Star-Ledger

TRENTON — For a precious two-and-a-half hours today, it looked like the state's residents could bank on tax relief courtesy of a **bipartisan deal struck** by Gov. Chris Christie and Senate President Stephen Sweeney.

Everything seemed set. The governor's



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The three Ps – to explore Policy, focus on People and Places



Tip: Framing a story around people

- How they do it in movies
- What does the person want?
- And how does he or she get it?
(That's the plot or narrative)
- And how is state policy helping or hurting
this person's journey?

Allen Brown: What does he want?

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Idaho

Bringing the Economy Home

Jobless in Idaho: Laid Off Mill Worker Uncertain of His Future

DECEMBER 15, 2011 | 6:30 AM

BY EMILIE RITTER SAUNDERS

1 Comment

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Name: Allen Brown

Age: 44

Unemployed Since: October 2011

“Every day I go out and look for a job, come back in and look at my answering machine, see if it’s flashing, see if I’ve gotten a call – but as of yet, I haven’t.”

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How does he get it?

Jobless in Idaho: Leaving Home for the Oilfields

FEBRUARY 1, 2012 | 7:30 AM

BY EMILIE RITTER SAUNDERS

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EMILIE RITTER SAUNDERS / STATEIMPACT IDAHO

The Idaho Department of Labor estimates there are at least 65,000 people in the state without work. That doesn't include thousands more who are underemployed or have stopped looking for a job. This is the latest story in our "Jobless in Idaho" series, that follows several Idahoans in their search for work.

We introduced you to Allen Brown a few days before Christmas. He's a 44-year-old single father who was one of 250 people laid off from the **Clearwater Paper sawmill** in Lewiston. We recently caught up with Brown as he passed through Boise on his way to a job interview in

Jobless In Idaho: Promise Of Work In The Oilfields

MAY 9, 2012 | 10:47 AM

BY EMILIE RITTER SAUNDERS

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*Idaho's economy is moving in a positive direction, but it still hasn't made up for the jobs lost during the Great Recession. Allen Brown got his layoff notice in the fall of 2011. Now, at 44-years-old, he's waiting to start a new career. We check in with Brown for our continuing series **Jobless In Idaho**.*

By the middle of February, Lewiston, Idaho resident Allen Brown had set his sights on work in the oilfields and was making plans to head to Wyoming for new job training.



COURTESY ALLEN BROWN

Allen Brown is a single father with three teenage daughters. He lost his mill job in October, 2011.

Tres Whitlock: What does he want?

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Florida

Putting Education Reform To The Test

LEARN

No Choice: Florida Charter Schools Failing To Serve Students With Disabilities

DECEMBER 14, 2011 | 6:30 AM

BY JOHN O'CONNOR AND SARAH GONZALEZ

3 Comments

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Pennsylvania's Mike Krancer

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Pennsylvania

Energy. Environment. Economy.

REGULATI

Mike Krancer And The EPA: It's Complicated

MAY 15, 2012 | 10:00 AM

BY SCOTT DETROW

5 Comments

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Context Is King

- Key Question: What's the larger narrative?
- Sources of context: historical perspectives, regional/ 50-state/ int'l comparisons, parallel debates at the federal level
- Is this part of a trend? If not, what *is* the trend, and how is this different?
- Connect your audience to the big picture

Context Is King

- Don't just tell us what happened
- Tell us why / how it happened
- Tell us what's happening elsewhere and how this event fits into that pattern
- What seems likely to happen in the future?
- A story without context is just anecdotes and facts

Context isn't onerous

- Can be one or two paragraphs
(usually near the top)
- Depth and breadth flows naturally from covering your beats
- For every banner story, interview at least two regional or national experts
- Use me as a context coach!

Context isn't onerous

Md. passes income tax hike on six-figure earners

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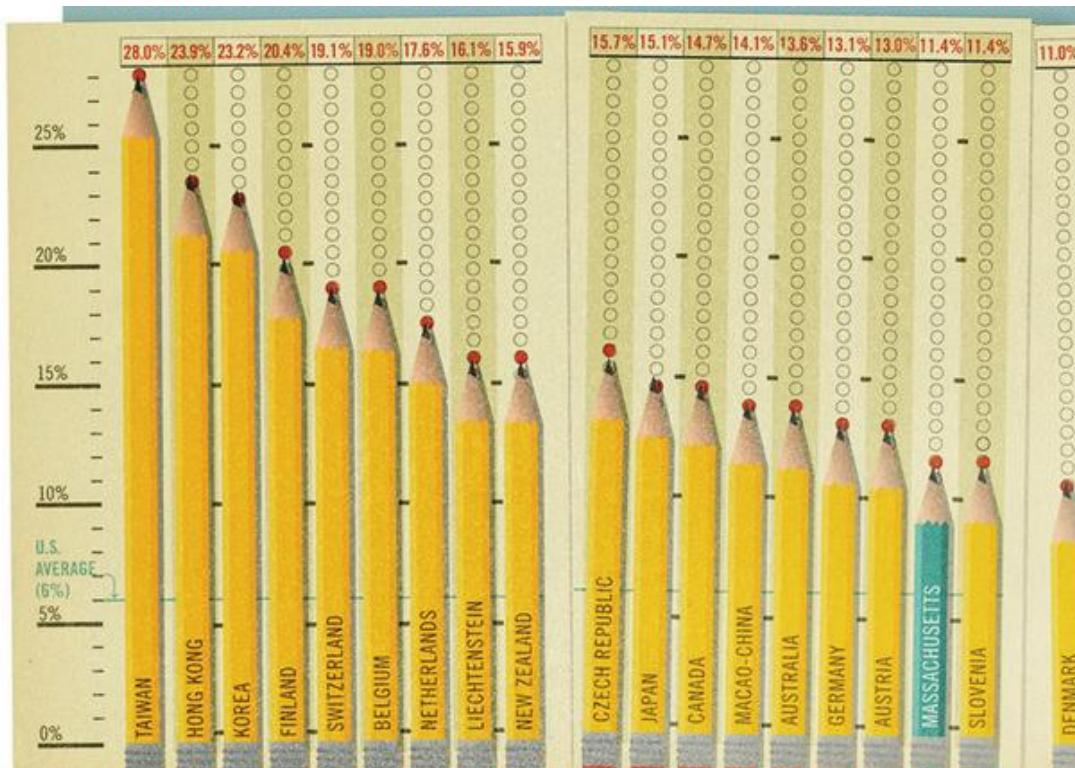
By Aaron C. Davis, Published: May 16

More than 300,000 Maryland residents will pay higher income taxes under a package given final approval by the legislature Wednesday.

The tax increase affects single-filers reporting income in excess of \$100,000 and joint-filers reporting more than \$150,000 in Maryland, the state with the nation's highest per-capita income.

<http://wapo.st/KvNahx>

Context: Comparing States



<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2010/11/your-child-left-behind/66069/>

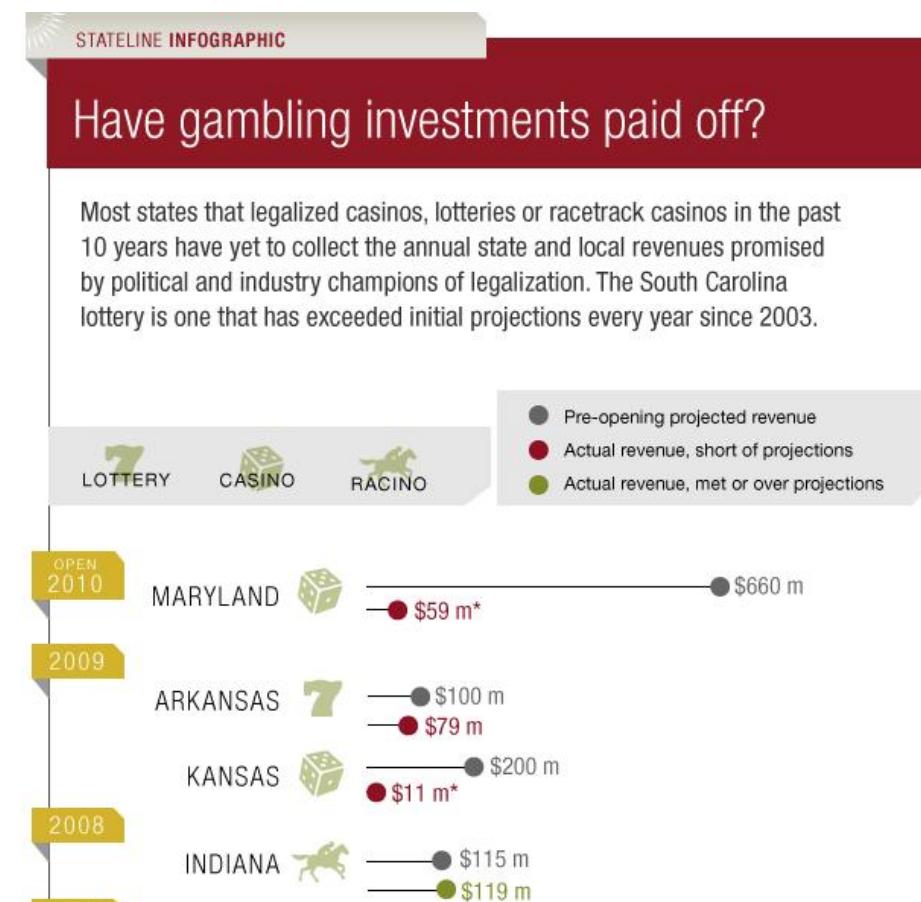
Context: Comparing States

- Where to find this kind of information:
NCSL, NGA, GAO, NASBO, plus education
and energy trade groups
- Call me! I can help find a source.

Context: Leaders and Laggards

- Why is my state in the top 10?
- Why is my state in the bottom 10?
- What state is the very best? How did they get that way? What can we do to be like them? (opportunity for sharing this information across the network)

Context: Historical perspectives



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Context: Stories about the future

- Demography is destiny – and a roadmap of our future policy challenges
- NH has one of the nation's oldest populations, TX has one of the youngest – what are the policy implications?
- New technology is always raising new policy concerns

Other tools & policy story hooks: Mystery stories

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Pennsylvania
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A Link Between Heavy Drilling and Illness? Doctors Search for Solid Answers

APRIL 27, 2012 | 11:30 AM
BY SUSAN PHILLIPS

26 Comments [Email](#)
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Doctors in heavily drilled areas across Pennsylvania are starting to see more patients who report symptoms they think might be related to gas activity. But with all the talk about health concerns and Marcellus Shale, what are the links between the two? And where does a doctor turn for answers? For this story, we spoke to several doctors who expressed frustration with trying to treat suspected shale related



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Other tools & policy story hooks: Curiosities

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Texas
Reporting on Power, Policy and the Planet **INNOV**

Is It Legal to Kill Bigfoot in Texas?

MAY 10, 2012 | 10:19 AM
BY TERRENCE HENRY

43 Comments Email
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Other tools & policy story hooks: Big ideas

- Authors, researchers, upcoming books
- Expert interviews
- This is content that is easy to share across the network

Don't be afraid to go to the Capitol

- While we're not covering the statehouse, legislation and process...
- The Capitol still is a hub of ideas, bills, policymakers, lobbyists, data and nuggets of information you can take out and inform your reporting

But at the Capitol, this is not us.



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Charles Eames & you



People and Places



Powers of Ten Video: <http://www.powersof10.com/film>

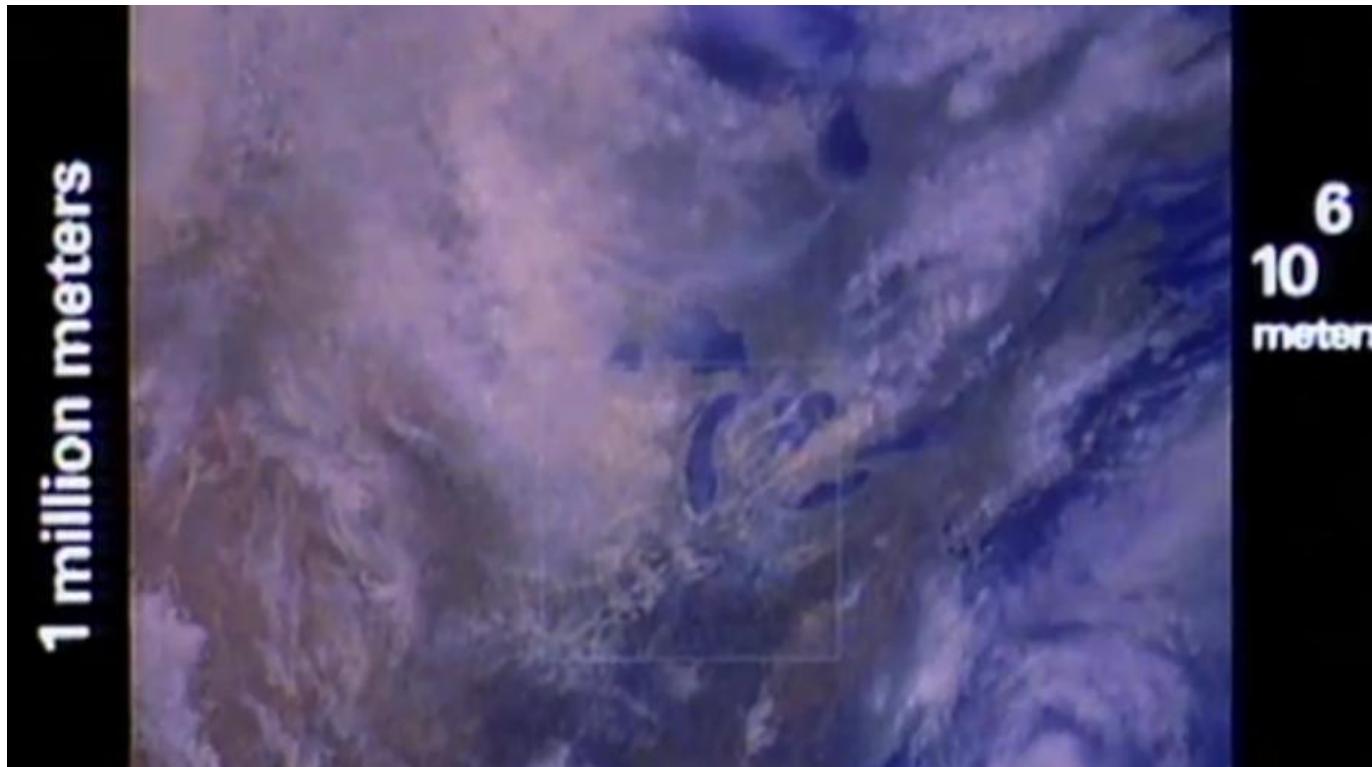
Context: Metro



Context: Surrounding states



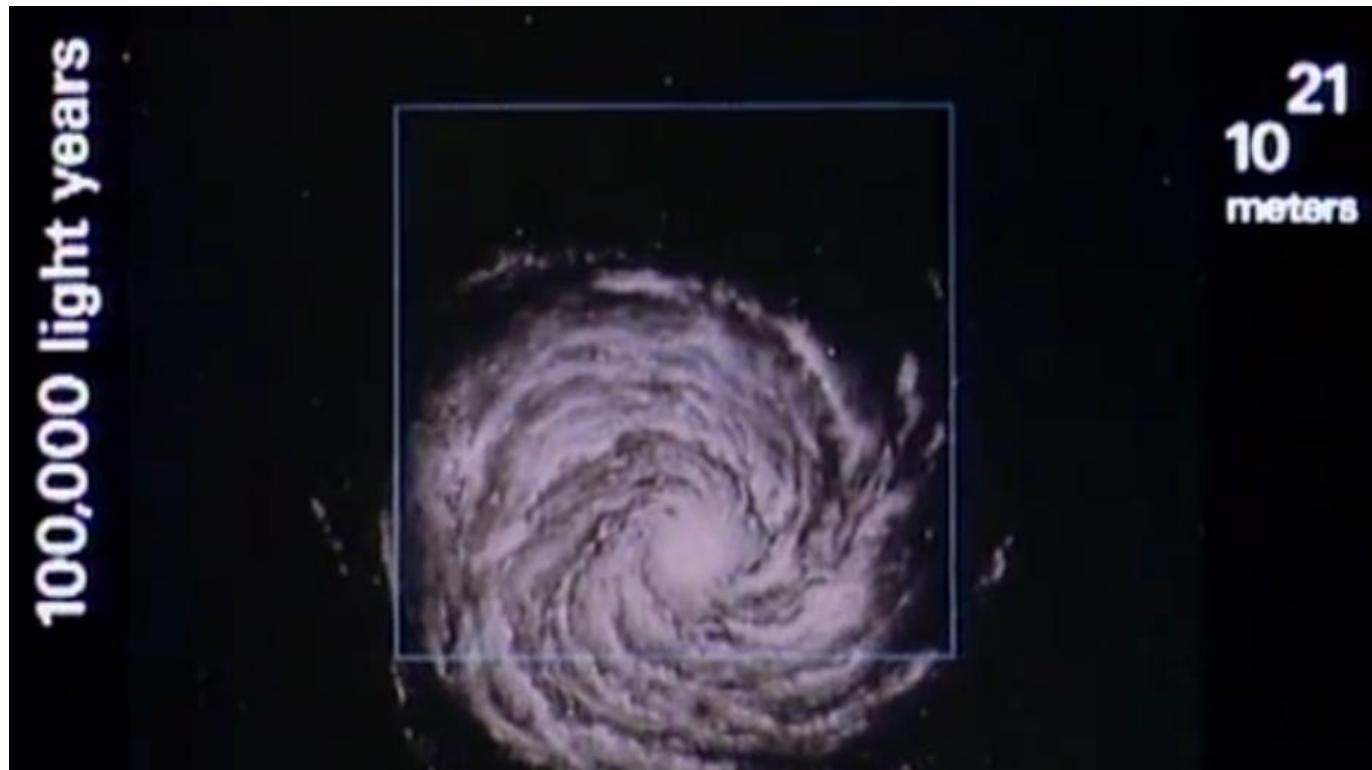
Context: 50-states



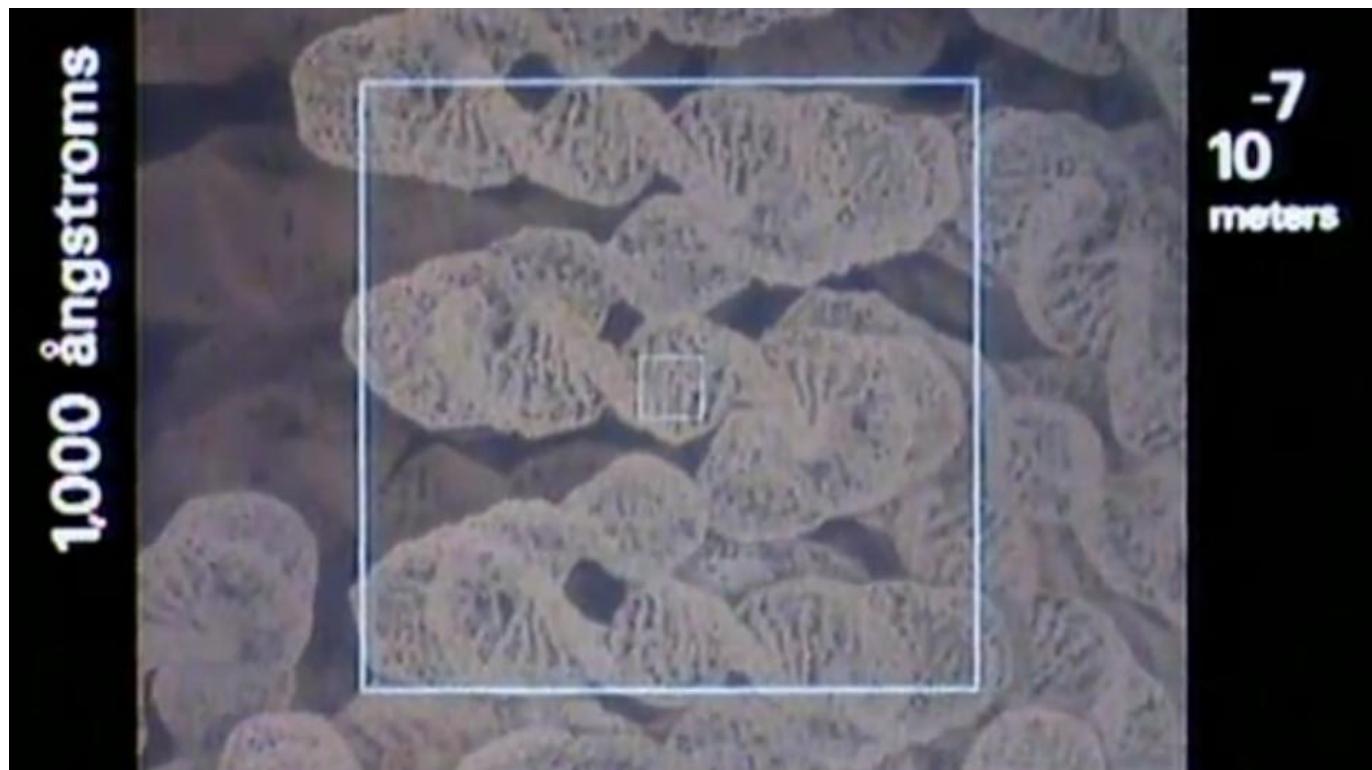
Context: International



Don't go here!



Or here!



Mostly, stay here



What does he want?
How does he get it?
And is state policy helping him or in his way?

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